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U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY AND JAPAN: A Strategy for the 21st Century

Introduction

One cannot underestimate the level of importance of the multifaceted alliance between the world's two largest and most technologically advanced economies – the U.S. and Japan. With shared democratic values and principles, both have much to gain – or lose – with a shift in the balance of power in Asia. This paper examines the U.S.-Japan alliance in the context of U.S. national security interests, threats to those interests, opportunities to increase U.S. national security in the region, and a strategy for the 21st century in this regard.

U.S.-Japan Alliance Post-Cold War

The absence of a sustained effort by the U.S. and Japan to engage on common security themes in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, coupled with a growing sense of economic competition and hostility between the two countries, marked the late 1980s and early 1990s. The contrast between a close security partnership and an intense economic rivalry always has made for a difficult coexistence, but during this period, balance was lost with far more time spent on economic issues than on the potential conduct of the alliance in a crisis.[1]

In the U.S.-Japan alliance, there has been a traditional reticence to explicitly examine security inside Japan. Historically, the delineation of roles and missions has been defined as follows: the U.S. takes care of Japan's security, and in exchange, Japan asks no questions. For much of the U.S. national security apparatus, nothing could be more comfortable than an ally that provides bases and generous host-nation support, and does not want to be consulted.[2] But, Japanese attitudes about security are in flux today, and recurring public and private questions exist about the long-term viability of the alliance as it is currently

structured.

The U.S.-Japan alliance has been and continues to be the main pillar of Japanese security policy. Japan has developed ground, air and maritime forces whose equipment and capabilities dove-tail with those of the U.S. Japan has the most technologically advanced and most powerful air and naval forces in East Asia, but remains dependent on the U.S. to cover critical gaps in its defenses. And, Japan is almost devoid of a power projection capability.

American bilateral relations with Japan ensure that America's military, political and economic interests are protected. The extended nuclear deterrence offered to its ally and the presence of U.S. forces in Japan permit Japan to maintain its peace constitution, to eschew the development of an offensive military force, and to feel secure in a nuclear age without an arsenal of nuclear weapons.

Japanese concern about regional threats to its security, worries about its place in the U.S. security strategy, and anxiety about recent blows to its regional leadership have resulted in a small and gradual shift by Japan to more assertive nationalism. At present, this trend has cross-cutting, but generally favorable, implications for U.S. security interests. Recent events in neighboring countries have underscored to both Japanese and American planners and policymakers that the U.S. forward military presence in Asia remains crucial to the region's stability, and that the U.S.-

Japan alliance is critical to that role.

Japan's National Security Environment

Asia enjoys the dubious and unprecedented distinction of having every major threat to peace and stability, including the still highly militarized division of the Korean peninsula, the increasingly unpredictable nature of the cross-strait situation between China and Taiwan, and the dangerous nuclear rivalry between India and Pakistan.

The threat previously posed to Japan by the ballistic missiles and naval and air forces of the former Soviet Union has been replaced by a number of new and more complex security challenges. Although these threats may be of a lower magnitude than the previous risk of becoming the object of Soviet aggression or a target in a U.S.-Soviet nuclear exchange, in some ways they appear to have a higher probability of materializing. Moreover, the new sources of potential threat have emerged at a time when Japan's national self-confidence has been shaken by nearly a decade of economic stagnation, a highly fluid political situation, and an inadequate institutional structure for crisis management and strategy formulation[3]

In the latter part of the 1990s, Japan experienced three "security shocks".[4] The ***first*** of these was the Chinese missile tests over the Taiwan Strait in 1995 and 1996, leading Japan to doubt China's commitment to a no-first-use policy, while acutely heightening its perception of China's missile threat. (A recent intelligence report also revealed that the number of Chinese coastal-deployed M-9s and shorter-range M-11x has been and will be increasing dramatically over the next five years.) The ***second*** shock concerned the North Korean test launch of the Taep'odong 1, which was lobbed over Japanese territory, and was a rude awakening that North Korea's missile program had progressed farther than either the U.S. or Japan had imagined. The ***third*** shock two-fold: nuclear testing by India and then Pakistan in 1998 and the U.S. Senate's decision not to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in the fall of 1999 -- both very powerful issues for the Japanese as citizens of the only country to have ever suffered a nuclear attack. These shocks have had a psychological impact on the Japanese, which will most certainly tangibly influence the direction of the Japanese perspective on the U.S.-Japan alliance.

Japan has a long-standing legal determination that self-defense can be exercised only at the lowest possible level, and it bans the possession of weapons characterized as offensive, as well as participation in collective security

arrangements. The aforementioned "security shocks," coupled with the recent collapse of single party dominance and the emergence of a more complex Japanese security environment, have prompted a perceptible shift in the outlook of Japanese officials, legislators, the media, and the general public regarding defense issues, and have made defense policymaking an intensely political process. Thus far Japan has responded cautiously and with continuing deference to the post-World War II "peace" constitution.[5]

During the past two years, movement towards a more assertive and more nationalistic security posture has gained momentum. For example, Japan and the U.S. agreed in September 1997 on measures to enhance Tokyo's ability to provide logistical and other non-combat support to U.S. forces in the event of a regional crisis. Japan also has taken limited steps to increase its own self-defense capability, and has made a concerted effort to promote military exchanges, consultation and confidence-building with China, South Korea, and other regional states. (However, the concrete sources of friction between Japan and its Asian neighbors have been exacerbated by the legacy of Japan's past aggression toward those neighbors.)[6]

In late May 1999, Japanese legislation was passed that allowed for a number of important enhancements to the support that could be provided to U.S. forces in a

variety of regional crises or conflict situations (*e.g.*, joint planning with U.S. forces for meeting a range of contingencies with Japan having the necessary legal authority to fulfill its obligations under the resultant plans).

The combination of rising security-mindedness and continuing vestiges of anti-military sentiment now prevailing suggests a future U.S.-Japan security relationship that is potentially stronger, but also is likely to be more complex and difficult to manage. The passage of the Defense Guidelines legislation by the Diet underscores the continuing importance that Japan attaches to the U.S. connection, but also signals a substantial shift of the parameters of the debate in the direction of a more active defense posture.[7]

U.S. National Security Interests with Respect to Japan

Japan has played and can continue to play an indispensable role as a base for U.S. air operations, a rear area for ground troops and naval forces, and a source of non-lethal war material. For example, some of the most important U.S. bases in the western Pacific are located in Okinawa. These include Kadena Airbase that supports strategic airlift operations to East Asia and even the Middle East, two-thirds of a division-size Marine Expeditionary Force, and Futenma Marine Air

Station that has runways and parking aprons of sufficient size to accommodate the large cargo planes that would deliver helicopters from the U.S. in an emergency. Okinawa is the only location in the western Pacific that is within flying range of the Korean peninsula by CH-53 helicopters. The northern part of the island provides unique opportunities to maintain the readiness of U.S. forces in the region, including ranges at which American forces in the Pacific can conduct live firing exercises.[8]

Threats to U.S. National Security with Respect to Japan

The spread of nuclear weapons, North Korea's ballistic missile programs, growing piracy in principal shipping routes, China's rising military power and regional influence, and regional instability (*e.g.*, political turmoil in Indonesia and other Southeast Asian countries) directly and indirectly threaten both U.S. and Japanese economic, political and financial interests. An additional threat arises from the Asian financial crisis that began in July 1997, significantly deepening anxiety about regional stability and weakening the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Another potentially serious threat to U.S. national security in the region derives from further deterioration of the U.S.-Japan alliance.

In public opinion polls taken in Japan, the U.S. always is overwhelmingly named the "most friendly" country to Japan. But, the Japanese believe that the U.S. is less friendly to Japan today than it has been in the past. Seventy-five percent of the Japanese express support for the U.S.-Japan security alliance and expect it to continue in the near future.[9] In spite of that large margin of support for the U.S.-Japan alliance, a substantial portion of the public has suspicions about the purposes of U.S. bases, and only a bare majority supports the U.S. military presence. The number of mainstream politicians who call for the reduction and eventual phasing out of U.S. bases has grown in recent years.

The process of formulating foreign policy in both Japan and the U.S. is changing in fundamental ways (*i.e.*, increased roles in both the Diet and the Congress). And, there are clear signs of divergence in perspectives between Washington and Tokyo. Some U.S. policymakers believe that Japan is in the process of a long, slow decline, and therefore is not as important in future U.S. calculations There appears to be a parallel perception in Tokyo of U.S. arrogance and a sense that Washington has done too much lecturing and not enough listening in their infrequent strategic interactions. Evidence of these perceptions can be found in the following:

- There is an apparent failure of Japanese-style, government-led economic management to adjust adequately to economic globalization, and the reality that many sectors of the Japanese

economy would be uncompetitive without various forms of direct and indirect protection from global market forces. Japan's trade surpluses have continued to mount in recent years, but mainly because of a fall in imports. The Japanese feel that the U.S. has pressured them on trade issues and have grown increasingly impatient over trade policy criticism from the U.S. [10]

- Japan continues to struggle with the consequence of a massive overhaul of corporate debt resulting from the collapse of its economic "bubble" in the late 1980s. Unsolicited advice from U.S. policymakers on how Japan should boost its economy has been particularly resented – even when that advice is recognized as sound.[11]

- The U.S. Senate's decision not to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in the fall of 1999 gave credence to Japanese suspicions that the U.S. is no longer willing to sustain its commitment to allied cooperation on nuclear nonproliferation and that the U.S. is only interested in its own security.[12]

- Japanese officials worry that the U.S. might negotiate an agreement with North Korea concerning its missile program that addresses only its export of missiles – and not the development and testing of missiles capable of hitting Japan.[13]

- Japan perceives an American tendency to act unilaterally on regional issues without sufficient regard for Japanese perspectives and concerns, frequently undercutting Japan's policies.[14]

- The Japanese feel that the U.S. has taken Japan's support for granted on international political and security issues.[15]

- There are growing signs of uneasiness with the U.S. presence

and its military training in Japan.

Opportunities to Increase U.S. National Security with Respect to Japan

Opportunities to increase U.S. national security with respect to Japan lie in the ability of U.S. policymakers to ***identify means to satisfy Japan's key security aid political concerns related to the U.S. role*** as follows:

- The presence of ***U.S. forces must be acceptable to the people of host countries***. Changes in the organization and deployment of U.S. troops should include consideration of their greater ability to perform non-combat operations – which has become a growing requirement. These forces must be prepared to undertake a variety of tasks, including traditional military exercises with allies and other forms of military contact, as well as disaster relief missions, non-combat evacuation operations, removal of mines, peace enforcement, and short-term peacekeeping that has a well-defined exit strategy, and addressing such problems as smuggling and the drug trade.[16]

- In light of the rise of China's economic and military power and related concerns that Beijing may have hegemonic designs, Japan questions U.S. steadfastness regarding U.S.-Japan alliance issues and an ***economic "tilt" toward China***. [17]

- The persistence of long-standing territorial disputes between Japan and China, South Korea and Russia have resulted in conflicting claims that have important implications for ***fishing*** and

access to ***underseas resources***. [18]

- The benefits of ***Japanese business investment*** in China and ***official loans and grants*** averaging $1B a year, have not been realized as fully as had been expected.

- The emergence of a ***North Korea nuclear and ballistic missile threat*** has dramatically affected Japan's changing security outlook.

- Constitutional issues that go to the heart of Japan's ***self-defense stance*** are being debated as never before.

- Involvement of the ***Japanese civil sector*** can assure rapid reinforcement of U.S. troops in South Korea.

- In the future, the U.S.-Japan alliance may no longer suffice to ***protect Japanese security***.

- Due to increasing piracy, force may be needed to ***inspect ships***.

A Strategy to Enhance U.S. National Security with Respect to Japan

Asia has witnessed several potentially momentous developments recently that suggest a major change in the overall strategic environment in which the U.S.-Japanese partnership operates. These include the historic North-South summit on the Korean peninsula (with another planned for April or May 2001), the election and subsequent transfer of power in Taiwan; the crisis in Indonesia and the

resulting political spillover to ASEAN countries; an increasingly significant tactical alliance between Russia and China; the rise of China; major electoral realignments inside Japan that could affect the security debate; and the inevitable political and operational issues raised by the prospect of both Theater Missile Defense (TMD) and National Missile Defense (NMD). All of these issues require serious consideration within the framework of the U.S. -Japan partnership.[19]

Japan is likely to seek to reduce its current near-total dependence on U.S. military power for its security, and instead focus on multilateral cooperation and confidence-building. The most likely course for Japan would be to incrementally but steadily increase its own defense capabilities while also seeking to promote the development of regional institutions for confidence-building and cooperation – implying a reduction in the U.S. military presence. Japanese officialdom has shown a willingness to consider constitutional revisions that would legitimatize Japan's participation in collective defense arrangements or multilateral security institutions.[20]

The achievement of a new level of U.S.-Japan defense cooperation, coupled with a strong desire for a more independent regional policy, suggests that it is highly important to take Japanese views and interests into consideration in the formulation of U.S. policy. The main challenge for U.S. policymakers is to keep

the bilateral alliance central to Japanese security policy and to factor Japanese perspectives into U.S. policymaking.[21] Tokyo wants to be -- and should be -- consulted on security issues that affect Japan. The U.S. must demonstrate that the security relationship supports concrete Japanese interests in policy goals – not just those of the U.S., or vaguely defined mutual interests.

Ten tasks identified by Campbell that can be implemented to strengthen and sustain the U.S.-Japan alliance include[22]:

> ***Embark Upon a Broad and Sustained Strategic Dialogue***: Engage key politicians and influential opinion shapers from both societies in deep, sustained strategic dialogue to compare strategic perceptions on a wide range of critical issues (*e.g.*, potential for dramatic change on the Korean peninsula, the rise of China, the development of NMD, growing tensions in the Taiwan Strait, the implication of political incoherence inside ASEAN). The goal of this mutual endeavor would be to identify ways to encourage positive trends and develop contingency thinking for potentially negative setbacks.
>
> 1. ***Consider a New Framework for Trilateral Security Cooperation***: Develop a broader regional security framework through a more formal trilateral of security specialists from the U.S., Japan and South Korea who would focus on creating institutions and procedures that transcend the division of Korea.
>
> 2. ***Seek a "Virtual Trilateralism" Among America, Japan and China***: These three powers must negotiate a strategic "modus operandi" whereby each nation assures the

other two of its intentions and improves trust and confidence on the margins.

3. ***Establish Working Groups on Emerging Security Challenges***: Explore emerging threats to peace and stability by expanding the dialogue beyond the ministries of defense and foreign affairs to include key domestic agencies involved in the protection of critical infrastructure. Address issues such as intelligence, cyber-security, chemical and biological threats, and homeland defense.

4. ***Reexamine Roles and Missions of Armed Forces***: Discuss security cooperation in the context of a division of respective roles and missions to assure a smoothly functioning and cost-efficient alliance.

5. ***Reexamine Defense Procurement Cooperation***: Explore priorities and procedures for potential areas of procurement cooperation in light of “lessons learned” from the less-than-successful joint FSX fighter plan experience.

6. ***Continue to Implement the Defense Guidelines Legislation***: Focus on the operational dimensions of the 1998 revision to the Defense Guidelines to complement the work on the political and diplomatic aspects.

7. ***Seek Greater Operational and Facility Cooperation***: The U.S. and Japan could combine more of their “separate and unequal” facilities, with the U.S. taking the lead to share its more modern U.S.-only bases with Japanese partners -- thereby reducing “partner envy.” Training could be coordinated and synchronized to reduce noise, intrusiveness and inconvenience. These measures would be cost-efficient and preempt Japanese criticism of now primarily U.S.

military establishments.

8. ***Review U.S. Military Training and Procedures in Japan***: The U.S. could review military training and standard operating procedures in light of readiness, as well as Japanese concerns about noise and intrusiveness into day-to-day life (*e.g.*, Okinawa) and highly publicized crimes committed by U.S. troops against Japanese citizens. With these modifications, Japanese counterparts could, in exchange, more strongly and more publicly support U.S. activities that assure the readiness and smooth functioning of the alliance.

9. ***Seek Greater Flexibility in U.S. Forward Presence***: By refocusing on actual military capabilities instead of numbers of troops to account for U.S. power and resolve, the U.S. could implement long-term deployment of smaller packages of forces in more host communities throughout Asia (*e.g.*, Singapore, Phillippines, Thailand, Australia).

Summary

Growing support in Japan for a more assertive military posture, coupled with continuing vestiges of pacifism, suggest a future U.S.-Japan security relationship that is potentially stronger, but also more complex and difficult to manage. Currently, Japan appears likely to continue to take small but steady steps towards acquiring defense capabilities that are parallel – not just complementary – with those of the U.S., while still hewing close to the U.S.-Japan alliance. Japan seems

committed to the development of a ballistic missile defense (BMD) system, most likely in cooperation with the U.S., but also is undertaking a costly effort to develop a national reconnaissance satellite system in lieu of continued dependance on U.S. intelligence. And, there is growing sentiment to reduce and eventually eliminate U.S. military bases in Japan.[23]

Increased Japanese burden-sharing -- coupled with more mutual decision-making -- best protects the long-term U.S. interests in continued U.S. access to “strategic” Japanese bases while reducing the relative U.S. defense burden and making the alliance more compatible with the Japanese public’s desire to be rid of the U.S. military bases that are most disruptive of day-to-day life. Other recommended changes in the alliance could “harness” Japan more closely to U.S. policy objectives, including the creation of a “comprehensive security” pact, a revised mutual security treaty and a common market agreement that would mesh both the economies and the defense establishments in a relationship involving more Japanese reciprocity.[24] Most likely, Japanese and U.S. policymakers will seek to adopt incremental responses to changing circumstances.

All of the necessary conditions (*i.e.*, a proven track record, generally favorable public attitudes, and clear strategic and military imperatives) are in place to continue what is perhaps the most important bilateral security alliance in the world

today. Japan and the U.S. must acknowledge that deep strategic reflection is in the best interests of the alliance and key to the preservation of peace and stability in Asia.[25]

Questions

1. What actions can the U.S. take to make the presence of ***U.S. forces more acceptable to the people of Japan*** with regard to non-combat operations:

- traditional military exercises?

- other forms of military contact?

- disaster relief missions?

- evacuation operations?

- removal of mines?

- peace enforcement?

- short-term peacekeeping?

- smuggling?

- drug trade?

1. What actions can the U.S. take to reassure the Japanese of U.S. steadfastness to U.S.-Japan alliance issues in light of Japanese perceptions of a ***U.S. economic "tilt" toward China***?

2. What actions can the U.S. take to support Japanese claims related to ***fishing*** and access to ***underseas resources***?

4. What actions can the U.S. take to support ***Japanese business investment?***

5. What actions can the U.S. take to secure ***official loans and grants*** Japan made to China?

1. What actions can the U.S. take to assure Japan's security with regard to the ***North Korea nuclear and ballistic missile threat?***

2. How can the U.S. best engage in the debate related to Japan's ***self-defense stance***?

3. How can the U.S. best engage the ***Japanese civil sector*** to assure rapid reinforcement of U.S. troops in South Korea?

4. What additional actions can the U.S. take to ***protect Japanese security***?

5. How can the U.S. best support ***ship inspections*** in Asian waters?

6. What is the general outlook with regard to political leadership in the legislature?

7. What is the general outlook with regard to Japan's economic future?

- Specifically, what actions has Japan taken to address the underlying issues related to the recent Asian financial crisis?

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[1]Campbell, Kurt M. "Energizing the U.S.-Japan Security Partnership," *The Washington Quarterly*, Autumn 2000, v. 23, I.14, p. 125.

[2]*Ibid.*, p. 125.

[3]Cronin, Richard P. "Japan's Changing Security Outlook: Implications for U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation," *Congressional Research Service Report for*

Congress, July 9, 1999, p.2

[4]Funabashi, Yoichi. "Tokyo's Temperance," *The Washington Quarterly*, Summer 2000, v23, i3, p. 135.

[5]Cronin, Richard P., p. i.

[6]*Ibid*., p. 4.

[7]*Ibid*., p. 27.

[8]*Ibid*., p. 14.

[9]*Ibid*., p. 9.

[10]*Ibid*., p. 7.

[11]*Ibid*., p. 7.

[12]Funabashi, Yoichi, p. 135.

[13]Cronin, Richard P., p. 8.

[14]*Ibid*., p. 8.

[15]*Ibid*., p. 9.

[16]Wortzel, Larry M. "Planning for the Future: The Role of U.S. Forces I Northeast Asian Security," *The Heritage Foundation Backgrounder*, July 26, 2000, p. 4.

[17]Cronin, Richard P., p. 6.

[18]*Ibid*., p. 4.

[19]Campbell, Kurt M., p 125.

[20]*Ibid*., p. 28.

[21]*Ibid*., p. 29.

[22]Campbell, Kurt M., p. 125.

[23]Cronin, Richard P., p. 1.

[24]*Ibid*., p. 28.

[25]Campbell, Kurt M., p. 125.